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PROGRAM Viewpoint

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NOEL BEHN INTERVIEWED

CLAIRE KLEESS: Noel Behn is a producer, turned spy expert. To prove the point, his former production at the Cherry Lane Theatre began the off-Broadway boom.

And yet today, Noel Behn is known primarily as a spy novelist. He's author of the Kremlin Letter, which is currently being made into a film, and he has recently authored the Shadow Boxer. It hits the book stalls this September. ✓

Noel, thanks so much for joining us here on Viewpoint today.

BEHN: Claire, it's nice being here.

KLEESS: Now, give us the scoop, how does a theatrical producer -- top ranking theatrical producer turn into a spy expert?

BEHN: Very simply, writing a novel. Write fiction about espionage and everyone takes it as fact.

You know, there's this thing about espionage intelligence which scares the wits out of everybody. Every other headline, it seems, is talking about spy ships or something like the Green Berets, or U-2s, these great catastrophes, and in all fairness to organizations like CIA, and the other, they only hit the headlines, usually, when things go bad. So it looks like a disaster area, and for some -- and they can't talk about it. They can't tell you about their successes. Even the people involved, I would say, on the Pueblo, probably didn't know what it was they were after.

So, in a way, the only place you can tell an overall story dealing with intelligence, no matter how bizarre you might want to be, is in the novel form. And the novelist, of course, will tell you as much as he knows about his subject, so in a way....